

~~SECRET~~

## SSCI ANALYSIS AND PRODUCTION QUESTIONS

17 MARCH 1983

## QUESTION AREA: National Intelligence Estimates

QUESTION 1. Explain the process of producing NIEs, including the selection of the subject and the schedule by which they are produced. [ ]

25X1

- A. Since the number of NIEs is a measure of Community output, is there a tendency to produce more NIEs at the expense of quality?

ANSWER. Production of an estimate now begins with obtaining the DCI's approval for its preparation. An estimate may start from the request of a senior policy officer or the DCI himself, from a standing requirement for periodic assessments, or from an internal NIC proposal. In practice, most estimates stem from outside of the NIC; 43 of the 59 formal estimates produced in Calendar Year 1982 came from elsewhere in the system, although even those initiated by the NIC reflect policymakers' interests which our National Intelligence Officers (NIOs) have elicited. A new estimative project is assigned to one or more of these 14 NIOs to manage. As chairman of the paper, the NIO finds a suitable drafter, engages the rest of the Community in the production effort, sets the timetable, and presides over the paper's completion, review, and coordination. [ ]

25X1

Each estimate begins with the development of Terms of Reference and a Concept paper, with contributions to these building-block papers sought from a variety of sources, including, where appropriate, the requestor himself. When TORs acceptable to the Community have been worked out, the drafter or drafters set to work under the guidance of the paper's chairman. Once a workable draft is obtained, and before formal coordination by working-level representatives of the NFIB agencies takes place, drafts are sent to a variety of specialists and generalists inside and outside the Community for comment and advice. When formal coordination sessions are concluded, the paper goes to the DCI for his approval to place it on the agenda of an NFIB meeting. Final approval to publish each estimate is given by the DCI with the advice of NFIB members. [ ]

25X1

Even though the numbers of estimates produced have been increasing, we believe overall quality has been going up, not down. Reasons for this include: the allocation of additional analytical resources by the DCI to producing estimates in the past few years; a more deliberate effort on our part to get outside views on estimative drafts; and more involvement by the Community's senior officials in the formulation of estimative judgments. [ ]

25X1

25X1

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

- B. How are subjects and regions which are not of present interest, but critical for the future, protected under the NIE process?

ANSWER. Most estimates are done at the specific request of senior policymakers or the DCI, but others are prepared because National Intelligence Officers (NIOs) or other Community leaders discern a current or prospective need for them. Proposals for non-requested papers of this sort are made by the NIOs on a quarterly basis and discussed first within the NIC. On the basis of these discussions, a draft NIC Production Plan describing all papers proposed for production during the ensuing year is prepared, reviewed within the NIC, within the Directorate of Intelligence, and ultimately by all NFIB members. Copies are also sent to senior policymakers at State, Defense, and the NSC. Comments and suggestions for changes or additional papers are welcomed at any time, and papers are frequently added to the Plan as a result.



25X1

While this planning system cannot guarantee that no potentially important subject will be overlooked, we believe it minimizes the possibility.



25X1

QUESTION 2. Are resources for the production of NIEs sufficient in light of the demands placed on you by consumers?

ANSWER. Generally, yes. NIC resources assigned to estimates production have increased slightly over the past year, primarily through internal reallocation of several other NIC positions to our Analytic Group of estimates drafters. In addition, existing vacancies in the AG have now been filled, so that at present we have 14 analysts working there -- a high-water mark for this particular unit. We also have asked for four new positions in FY 1984 -- three analytical and one clerical -- which would further improve our ability to produce the kinds of studies in depth on the Soviet Union that we feel we ought to be doing. This would boost the staffing of the AG to a level that we believe adequate to handle the growing analytical load we are likely to carry. It is only adequate, however, because we continue to count on the cooperation of other Community organizations -- principally CIA's Directorate of Intelligence, DIA, and INR -- to provide drafters for a majority of the estimates we produce. (In CY 1982, these three units accounted for 45 of the total of 59 formal estimates we produced.)



25X1

QUESTION 3. Discuss how events during the past year have confirmed or disproved conclusions of the NIEs produced during the past few years.

SECRET

ANSWER. When held up against the actual record of world events in 1982, the Community's overall predictive performance of the past several years would best be described as mixed. [REDACTED]

25X1  
25X1

[REDACTED]

Other estimative forecasts have been considerably wide of the mark. [REDACTED] for instance, we inaccurately predicted a decisive Iranian victory over Iraq with possible serious effects on the political longevity of Saddam Hussein. While our general conclusions about the forces impelling Third World countries like Pakistan and Iraq to develop a nuclear weapons capability have proven basically valid, we have consistently overestimated the rate at which potential proliferators would acquire that capability. We have underestimated Soviet influence and interest in some areas of the world -- Latin America being a case in point. We probably have, on occasion, over-estimated Libyan strongman Qadhafi's ability to translate his aggressive threats into actual mischief-making, particularly directly against the US. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

Many estimates are, of course, essentially non-predictive in nature, being limited to describing or analyzing potential developments that could affect US interests, but not attempting to array them on a scale of most likely to least likely. Others simply describe the forces at work and the directions in which those forces are moving. We believe that while our predictive batting average can and should become higher, the final box scores will always show mixed results. Our crystal ball will continue to be clouded by unforeseeable events that abruptly or dramatically alter situations so that even the most complete intelligence information or the best analysis will come up short. [REDACTED]

25X1

QUESTION 4. How would you assess the performance of the NIC and its Analytic Group in the development of NIEs during the past two years?

ANSWER. The NIC has considerably strengthened the estimate process over the past two years. More estimates have been produced: 40 in 1980, 54 in 1981, 59 in 1982. Estimates are now produced more quickly, largely because of more recourse to new "fast track" procedures. Estimates are being shortened, and more attention is given the crafting of their Key Judgments. The estimates are being focused more on specific policy issues. This means that we are doing fewer "country" papers and more "issue" papers: e.g., INF, terrorism, international financial questions, [redacted] Soviet military capabilities in space, nuclear proliferation cases, Soviet use of "yellow rain" chemical toxins, etc. We are also engaging the chiefs of the intelligence services at earlier stages of the estimative process. There is more emphasis on expressing differences of view in the text, not just seeking consensus. [redacted]

25X6

25X1

The estimative process has also been strengthened in areas other than the production of interagency estimates, per se. Most importantly, the NIC/NIO system has resulted in much greater and more meaningful contact with principal policymakers. We have introduced new blood into the NIC, not just picking the best of CIA's career officers, but experts from DoD, the uniformed military, State, think tanks, and academia. This applies for all the professional levels of the NIC: the NIOs, the assistant NIOs, and the NIC's Analytic Group. The AG does much of the drafting of those estimates which are broad in character, cross-regional or cross-disciplinary. The NIC also produces in-house estimative pieces, many of which are specifically designed to explore contingent outcomes which may not necessarily be termed the most likely, but which would carry great consequences should they occur. [redacted]

25X1

A number of problems of course remain: e.g., imperfect evidence, difficulty in securing just the people we want for the NIC, coordination slowness, the hazards of conventional wisdom or too-specialized vantage points, estimates timidity, and imperfect feedback from our consumers. In sum, there is much room for improvement, but the NIC is actively working to such an end. [redacted]

25X1

QUESTION 5. How would you characterize the relationship between the NIC and the various offices of the DDI at CIA?

ANSWER. Although originally established within the Directorate of Intelligence, the NIC has been organizationally separate from it since mid-1981. The administrative separation has had little effect, however, on the functional closeness of the two organizations. More than half of all estimates continue to be drafted by DDI analysts, since we try to obtain the best available Community expert to draft each estimate and the DDI represents the largest analytical shop in the

SECRET

Community. Inasmuch as we are housed in CIA headquarters, we use the technical production facilities of the DDI to publish and disseminate our estimates. Although many NIC officers have come to us from outside organizations -- the military services, State, NSA, DIA, the academic world -- most are loaned to us for two or three years by DDI offices. In short, the NIC has been and remains closely linked with the DDI in order to accomplish its mission. Beyond that, the working relationship between the two organizations is cooperative and cordial. The top officials of both meet together regularly. Each takes pains to inform the other of resource and production decisions that will affect its own plans. [ ]

25X1

This close cooperation does not mean that an identity of analytical views on any subject is ever sought, however. One of the basic reasons for moving NIC out of the DDI was to make such a possibility less likely. The administrative separation has, in fact, helped foster more competitiveness between NIC analysts and their DDI counterparts -- a development we regard as healthy both for NIC's estimates and for the DDI's assessments. [ ]

25X1

QUESTION 6. The DCI has praised NIC for producing more estimates than ever before and for putting them out in record time. What steps have you taken to maintain quality control while achieving greater timeliness?

ANSWER. Our main checks on quality control come through the review process to which all estimative drafts are subjected whether they are produced quickly or not. Each draft is scrutinized by many individuals at many levels inside and outside the Intelligence Community before we pronounce ourselves sufficiently satisfied with it to seek the DCI's and NFIB's approval to publish it. A typical draft might originate in a DDI office. Once it were approved there it would then be likely to be examined -- and probably modified to some degree -- successively by the following individuals and units before reaching NFIB: the NIO chairing the paper; other NIOs, the NIC Analytic Group, and the NIC Chairman and Vice Chairman; the DCI's Senior Review Panel; one or more outside consultants on contract to the NIC; members of the US country team (or teams) serving in the foreign areas discussed in the text; the DCI and D/DI; and working-level representatives of each NFIB Agency. These reviews occur for each estimate produced, regardless of whether it is done on a "regular" or a "fast-track" basis; in the latter process, however, many of these steps occur simultaneously rather than sequentially. If at any stage in the process the NIO, Chairman NIC, or the DCI is dissatisfied with the quality of the draft, he can -- and sometimes does -- ask for a re-do, perhaps from scratch. Over the long run, moreover, we attempt to improve overall quality standards by attracting and training additional AG estimates officers with a flair for estimative writing and analysis and by seeking higher-quality drafters for those papers written outside the NIC. [ ]

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

QUESTION 7. To what degree does the NIE process foster competitive analysis? Can you cite specific examples?

ANSWER. We rely principally upon the rather elaborate NIE process itself to ensure the airing and consideration of competitive analyses in the course of producing our estimates. As the answers to earlier questions in this series have pointed out, many individuals and organizations get involved in weighing the evidence upon which each estimate is based. Many differing viewpoints on what that evidence means will be voiced during the estimate's consideration, and it is the rubbing of these ideas against each other throughout the process that guarantees that no one analyst's viewpoint will automatically prevail. Even though most drafts are written by one analyst, the review and coordination processes described above usually result in some if not a good many rather profound changes in the thrust of an estimate as the process unfolds. In the larger sense, then, the competitive analysis principle is the keystone of the national intelligence production process, and every estimate we do is done in accord with this principle. [REDACTED]

25X1

In addition, the NIC has taken a number of steps to increase the review of its work by both specialists and generalists who are outside the Community's regular estimative apparatus. The DCI's Senior Review Panel, a group of four distinguished senior officers with many years of experience in international relations, comments on every estimative Terms of Reference, Concept Paper, and first draft, frequently coming up with suggestions that we adopt for improving, expanding, or changing the exposition of a paper. And whenever possible we seek the reactions of CIA and embassy officers abroad to our drafts. To the degree that time permits, drafts are also reviewed by outside consultants -- individuals from the academic, business, and professional worlds who are among the country's most respected experts in their various fields. [REDACTED]

25X1

QUESTION 8. National Intelligence Estimates, Special National Intelligence Estimates, and Interagency Intelligence Memoranda seem to be the only publications of the Community which can focus policymaker attention on differences in analytic judgments among the various NFIP components. [REDACTED]

25X1

A. Do you seek a consensus in those documents, or do you encourage the airing of alternative views?

ANSWER. The whole point of the coordination process -- through which each NIE, SNIE, and IIM draft goes -- is to ensure that any analytical viewpoint that competes with or differs from the drafter's view gets a full hearing. Once heard, a differing view can (a) be persuasive enough to become the stated view of all; (b) be refuted persuasively enough to be dropped; or (c) be maintained, even

SECRET

SECRET

though others disagree, and appear in the final estimate as a formal dissent. In practice, either (a) or (b) tends to happen more often than (c). Perhaps this is unfortunate, but it takes a good deal of extra effort -- and more than a little courage -- to stand by one's guns and articulate a viewpoint different than that being expressed by everyone else, particularly when the others seem to have more evidence or greater expertise on their side. We do our best to combat "groupthink" by trying to draw out differences of view when we find them and they they appear solidly based, but this admittedly is a difficult task and we accomplish it only imperfectly. [ ]

25X1

- B. Can you explain why most interagency estimates relating to non-Soviet subjects contain virtually no dissenting opinions?

There have in fact been dissenting opinions in some estimates on non-Soviet-related topics (e.g., trends in the German SPD, a number of Central American issues, oil market prospects, North Korean attack plans, etc), but is certainly correct to say that dissents appear more often in Soviet-related estimates than in any others. We think this is because evidence on many Soviet matters is inherently indirect and circumstantial, while in most other parts of the world there is a larger component of directly verifiable -- and hence less arguable -- evidence. The fundamental importance of most Soviet issues for the US, moreover, as well as their operational implications for US policy, may lead agencies to dig in their heels in differences of judgment which they might be more inclined to soften in the case of less important areas. Then, too, some agencies devote the bulk of their analytic resources to coverage of Soviet affairs, putting them in a good position to take issue with others on these matters, but leaving them far less expert and less able to form independent judgments on other areas of the world. [ ]

25X1

In our Soviet estimates in particular, the increased sophistication and complexity of modern weapons systems and the long lead times required for their development have placed greater demands on intelligence for details of Soviet military policies and programs and longer-range forecasts. This has led to a considerable expansion in the number of discrete judgments called for in estimates on Soviet military matters -- and with it, an increase in the number of areas of potential disagreement. We also find that forecasts about Soviet policies and capabilities a decade or more in the future require intelligence judgments on matters about which the Soviets themselves have not decided, leaving room for considerable differences of view. [ ]

25X1

SECRET